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N.Y. Times Series

Freedom of Encounter Magazine

To the Editor:

In the long third article [April 27] in The New York Times series on the C.I.A., which begins with "the James Bonds and Mata Haris" and goes on to "Frankenstein's monster," there is somewhere in between a mention of Encounter, and we—former and present editors—are both puzzled and dismayed by it.

Encounter depends primarily on circulation and advertising income, and its small annual publishing deficit was, until two years ago, met by the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris.

The Congress's funds, in turn, were derived from various recognized foundations—all of them (from such institutions as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations to the smaller ones) publicly listed in the official directories, with their officers duly named, their activities described. Surely nobody could fail to be impressed—as the letter to you published May 9 from George Kennan, Robert Oppenheimer, J. K. Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. testifies—by the independent record of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in defending writers and artists in both East and West against misdeemeanors of all governments, including that of the United States. We know of no "indirect" benefactions.

Does The Times want the reader to infer that the editorial content or that the past or present editors of Encounter were in any way influenced by the C.I.A.? We cannot believe that this was The Times's intention.

Integrity of Contributors

Our political articles (a small fraction of the total contents) have been written by prominent journalists and scholars whose integrity and whose reputations are beyond question (many, in fact, are contributors to the Sunday Times Magazine and Book Review sections). They write as they please, and in Encounter they have been critical of the British adventure in Suez, the Soviet intervention in Hungary, the American role in the Bay of Pigs and the bombings in Vietnam.

As for the editors, we are our own masters and are part of nobody's propaganda.

May we also point out that in The Times's single sentence on Encounter there is one

obvious factual error (and in the International edition one serious typographical error)? It is not the case, as The Times stated, that Encounter had or has any German- or Spanish-language editions. Moreover, the version of the article published in The Times's International edition (April 28) contained a garbling of two separate sentences covering two different matters that makes your report sound even more suggestive than it was.

Two years ago Encounter became associated with Cecil Harmsworth King's Mirror group of newspapers in Britain, which has assumed financial responsibility for the magazine. Now, as then, Encounter's editors, beholden to no one, are publishing what and whom they please.

STEPHEN SPENDER
MELVIN J. LASKY
IRVING KRISTOL

New York, May 9, 1966

[The New York Times, in mentioning Encounter, did not say or intend to suggest that the editors of the magazine knew of any "indirect" benefactions or that its contributors had ever been propagandists for the C.I.A. On the contrary, Encounter is known as a distinguished international journal of independent opinion.—Editor, The Times]